

Polio Vaccination: What Everyone Should Know

At a Glance

CDC recommends that children get polio vaccine to protect against polio, or poliomyelitis. Inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) is the only polio vaccine that has been given in the United States since 2000. IPV is given by shot in the leg or arm, depending on the patient's age. Oral polio vaccine (OPV) is used in other countries.

CDC recommends that children get four doses of polio vaccine. They should get one dose at each of the following ages: 2 months old, 4 months old, 6 through 18 months old, and 4 through 6 years old.

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Who Should Get Polio Vaccine?

Infants and Children

Children in the United States should get inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) to protect against polio, or poliomyelitis. They should get four doses total, with one dose at each of the following ages:

- 2 months old
- 4 months old
- 6 through 18 months old
- 4 through 6 years old

Children who will be traveling to a [country where the risk of getting polio is greater](#)  should complete the series before leaving for their trip. If a child cannot complete the routine series before leaving, an accelerated schedule is recommended as follows:

- 1 dose at age 6 weeks or older
- a second dose 4 or more weeks after the first dose
- a third dose 4 or more weeks after the second dose
- a fourth dose 6 or more months after the third dose

If the accelerated schedule cannot be completed before leaving, the remaining doses should be given in the affected country, or upon returning home, at the intervals recommended in the accelerated schedule. In addition, children completing the accelerated schedule should still receive a dose of IPV at 4 years old or older, as long as it has been at least 6 months after the last dose.

Adults

Most adults do not need polio vaccine because they were already vaccinated as children. But three groups of adults are at higher risk and should consider polio vaccination in the following situations:

- You are traveling to a country where the risk of getting polio is greater. Ask your healthcare provider for specific information on whether you need to be vaccinated.
- You are working in a laboratory and handling specimens that might contain polioviruses.
- You are a healthcare worker treating patients who could have polio or have close contact with a person who could be infected with poliovirus.

Adults in these three groups who have never been vaccinated against polio should get 3 doses of IPV:

- The first dose at any time,
- The second dose 1 to 2 months later,
- The third dose 6 to 12 months after the second.

Adults in these three groups who have had 1 or 2 doses of polio vaccine in the past should get the remaining 1 or 2 doses. It doesn't matter how long it has been since the earlier dose(s).

Adults who are at increased risk of exposure to poliovirus and who have previously completed a routine series of polio vaccine (IPV or OPV) can receive one lifetime booster dose of IPV.

Who Should Not Get Polio Vaccine?

Tell the person who is giving the vaccine:

- **If the person getting the vaccine has any severe, life-threatening allergies.**
If you ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction after a dose of IPV, or have a severe allergy to any part of this vaccine, you may be advised not to get vaccinated. Ask your health care provider if you want information about vaccine components.
- **If the person getting the vaccine is not feeling well.**
If you have a mild illness, such as a cold, you can probably get the vaccine today. If you are moderately or severely ill, you should probably wait until you recover. Your doctor can advise you.

This information was taken directly from the [Polio Vaccine Information Statement \(VIS\)](#) dated 7/20/2016.

What are the Types of Polio Vaccine?

Two types of vaccines protect against polio, or poliomyelitis.

- **Inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV)**
 - IPV is the only polio vaccine that has been used in the United States since 2000.
 - It is given by shot in the leg or arm, depending on the patient's age.
 - Children should get four doses total, with one dose at each of the following ages:
 - 2 months old,
 - 4 months old,
 - 6 through 18 months old, and
 - 4 through 6 years old.

For more information about IPV, see [Vaccine Composition, Dosage, and Administration](#).

- **Oral poliovirus vaccine (OPV)**
 - This vaccine is no longer licensed or available in the United States.
 - It is still used in some parts of the world.
 - Children receive doses of the vaccine by drops in the mouth.

For more information, see [About Oral Polio Vaccine \(OPV\)](#) [↗](#).

Since 2000, only IPV has been used in the United States to eliminate the risk of [vaccine-derived poliovirus](#) that can occur with OPV. This decision was also based on the decreased risk of wild poliovirus being brought into the country and because the U.S. is currently polio-free.

The IPV that has been used in the United States since 1987 is as effective as OPV for preventing polio. Two doses of IPV provides 90% immunity (protection) to all three types of poliovirus; 3 doses provides at least 99% immunity.

How Well Does the Polio Vaccine Work?

Inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV), which is the only polio vaccine that has been given in the United States since 2000, protects almost all children (99 out of 100) who get all the recommended doses. For best protection, children should get four doses of polio vaccine.

What are the Possible Side Effects of Polio Vaccine?

With any medicine, including vaccines, there is a chance of side effects. These are usually mild and go away on their own, but serious reactions are also possible.

Some people who get IPV get a sore spot where the shot was given. IPV has not been known to cause serious problems, and most people do not have any problems with it.

Other problems that could happen after this vaccine:

- People sometimes faint after a medical procedure, including vaccination. Sitting or lying down for about 15 minutes can help prevent fainting and injuries caused by a fall. Tell your provider if you feel dizzy, or have vision changes or ringing in the ears.
- Some people get shoulder pain that can be more severe and longer-lasting than the more routine soreness that can follow injections. This happens very rarely.
- Any medication can cause a severe allergic reaction. Such reactions from a vaccine are very rare, estimated at about 1 in a million doses, and would happen within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

As with any medicine, there is a very remote chance of a vaccine causing a serious injury or death.

The safety of vaccines is always being monitored. For more information, visit CDC's [Vaccine Safety](#) site.

This information was taken directly from the [Polio Vaccine Information Statement \(VIS\)](#) dated 7/20/2016.

What are the Childcare and School Polio Vaccine Requirements?

All 50 states and the District of Columbia (DC) have state laws that require children entering childcare or public schools to have certain vaccinations. There is no federal law that requires this.

CDC recommends that all children get four doses of inactivated polio vaccine (IPV), with one dose at each of the following ages:

- 2 months old,
- 4 months old,
- 6 through 18 months old, and
- 4 through 6 years old.

All children who have received three doses of IPV before age 4 years should receive a fourth dose at 4 to 6 years of age (before or at school entry).

For more information, see [State Vaccination Requirements](#).

For more information, see [State vaccination requirements](#).

How Can Parents Pay for Polio Vaccine?

Most health insurance plans cover the cost of vaccines. However, you may want to check with your insurance provider before going to the doctor. [Learn how to pay for vaccines](#).

If you don't have health insurance, or if your insurance doesn't cover vaccines for your child, the [Vaccines for Children Program](#) may be able to help. This program helps families of eligible children who might not otherwise have access to vaccines. [To find out if your child is eligible](#), visit the [VFC website](#) or ask your child's doctor. You can also contact your [state VFC coordinator](#).

Educational Materials

- Polio Vaccine Information Statement
 - [In English](#)
 - [Other languages](#) 
- [Polio information on vaccines.gov](#)
- [CDC Polio Website](#)
- [CDC Feature: A Polio-Free US Thanks to Vaccine Efforts](#)
- Polio Factsheet for Parents
 - [In English](#)
 - [En Español](#)
- [Polio – Preventive Measures for Travelers](#)
- [Global Polio Eradication](#)
- [Polio: Questions and Answers](#)  [3 pages] 
- Polio is a serious disease...Make sure your child is protected!
 - [In English](#)  [1 page] 
 - [En Espanol](#)  [1 page] 
- [Child Immunization Schedule](#)

Related Pages

[Polio Vaccine Information Statement](#)

[Childhood Immunization Schedule](#)

[Adult Immunization Schedule](#)